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ABSTRACT

This review of demographic data and the educational literature on collee enrollment trends describes several population trends and assesses their anticipated effect on community college enrollments in Massachusetts. In section I, the argument is presented that the two-year colleges face a potentially unprecedented enrollment decline which, depending upon location, could be more severe than that facing any other segment of higher education. Section II reviews census data and population studies to assess the extent of the anticipated decline in the traditional college-aged population. After a discussion of national trends, statistics are presented indicating that Massachusetts will not have the same resurgence in the college-aged population that the rest of the nation can expect by the end of the century. Section III considers the effect of the decline on community colleges and reports the American Council on Education's suggestions for strategies that could potentially offset the decline in the student pool. This section also contains an analysis of potential dangers which may prove the optimistic projections held by many for the community college's future to be wrong. Warnings are offered that adult attendance may level off or even decline as the employment situation improves and the baby boomers move into middle age; and that community colleges can expect increased competition from other segments of higher education for students and funding. Section IV highlights the particular position of the Massachusetts community colleges, looking at structural weaknesses, current policies of the Board of Regents, differentiated mission statements, and admissions standards. Finally, section V offers conclusions and recommendations in the areas of policy enforcement and budgetary issues. (EJV)

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THE DECLINE IN THE TRADITIONAL COLLEGE-AGED POPULATION

and

ITS IMPACT ON THE MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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IC 860 143

A paper prepared by J. Laurence Reeves
in fullfillment of course requirements:

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I. INTRODUCTION

The motivation behind this research paper is one of concern for the health and stability of community colleges, especially those in Massachusetts, as the effects of the decline in the college-aged population reach significant proportions over the next ten years. Although the decline has statistically been with us for almost five years, it is just now beginning to take hold, bringing with it a rude awakening to its consequences, both real and imagined.

The higher education community has been extremely slow to sense the importance of the decline in available students. In the case of the community colleges there is some justification based upon a well documented belief in the strength of the institution and it unique ability to respond to the varied and changing needs of its constituency. If the leaders of community colleges are to believe the experts, their position would appear quite good, one to be envied by the other segments of higher education. The Massachusetts Community Colleges, with which I have been associated for more than ten years, have been among the recipients of promising predictions. In 1983 the Massachusetts Board of Regents, in a report on the demographic changes in the state, indicated that the community colleges would be affected less by the decline than any other segment of public higher education.

Contrary to what we have heard however, I am convinced that the two-year colleges face a potentially unprecedented decline in enrollment which, depending on location, could be more severe than any other segment of higher education. The

community colleges in Massachusetts appear especially vulnerable because of unique historical and demographic conditions.

II. THE DEPTH OF THE PROBLEM: THE DECLINE IN THE TRADITIONAL COLLEGE-AGED POPULATION

In 1965 an article appeared in the Educational Record, in which U.S. census data was employed to predict that the number of people in the 18-21 year-old age group would almost double by the year 2000 (Cartter and Farrell). The population of this group in 1965 numbered slightly over 12 million. These authors predicated that by the year 2000 the number would reach almost 24 million. Table I summarizes the projections from 1955 through the year 2000. The table reveals that the children of the "baby boom" of the late 1940's and 1950's resulted in a swelling of the college aged population in the mid 1960's. Between 1975 and 1985 however, the growth in this group was projected as less than 1 million, signifying an end of the "bulge." The predicted increase in the rate of growth from 1985 through the end of the century was seen as a secondary effect of the original baby boomers reaching child bearing age. The rate then levels off at the beginning of the century.

The figures through 1980 are very accurate, obviously attributable to the fact that these people were already born at the time the paper was written. Cartter and Farrell recognized that in the early 1960's there was a decrease in the birth rate. This fact was reflected in their projection of 1% growth in the 18-21 year-old group during the years 1980-1985. What they

nor anyone else forsaw at the time was the very large, precipitous and continual decline in the birth rate that had begun in 1961 but really accelerated between 1964 and 1966, about the time the article was being written. Except for two years (1969 and 1970) that drop continued until 1974 when the birth rate began to rise again.

Table I

1965 Projected Population Trends
Age 18 - 21

Year	Number of People	Percentage Increase from Previous Year
1955	8,508,000	---
1960	9,546,000	12%
1965	12,282,000	29%
1970	14,278,000	16%
1975	16,107,000	13%
1980	16,790,000	04%
1985	16,957,000	01%
1990	18,880,000	11%
1995	21,570,000	14%
2000	23,730,000	10%

Source: Cartter and Farrell, 1965.

By the late 1960's the birth rate had declined more than 10%, but research of the works published during this period and into the early part of the next decade indicate an almost total absence of concern over the eminent decline in the college aged population. The first concerned voices came from writers documenting the actual decrease in the number of children attending elementary school in the early 1970's.

Understandably, members of the higher education community were greatly preoccupied during this time. Enrollments were expanding at an alarming rate and colleges were struggling to

build facilities and recruit faculty. College campuses had become the center of social and political turmoil caused by the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement. Little time was spent, nor were many people interested in hearing about the enrollment concerns of ten to twenty years in the future.

The future is now with us and, like our counterparts in the elementary schools of fifteen years ago, we are now waking to the realities of enrollment decline. Table II represents the actual and projected U.S. population trends for 18-21 year olds from 1965 through 2000.

Table II

1979 Projected Population Trends
Age 18 -21

Year	Number of People	Year	Number of People
1965	12,203,000	1983	16,499,000
1966	12,944,000	1984	15,906,000
1967	13,738,000	1985	15,442,000
1968	14,328,000	1986	14,873,000
1969	14,425,000	1987	14,520,000
1970	14,707,000	1988	14,470,000
1971	15,019,000	1989	14,600,000
1972	15,438,000	1990	14,506,000
1973	15,795,000	1991	14,179,000
1974	16,109,000	1992	13,685,000
1975	16,483,000	1993	13,198,000
1976	16,767,000	1994	12,971,000
1977	16,970,000	1995	13,248,000
1978	17,104,000	1996	13,886,000
1979	17,136,000	1997	14,719,000
1980	17,117,000	1998	15,825,000
1981	17,018,000	1999	16,821,000
1982	16,874,000	2000	17,692,000

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census. Population Characteristics, 1979.

The data reveals that the population increased by about 4 million until 1979 when this age group reached its zenith

of 17,136,000. The "trough" as it has been labeled will come in 1994 when the number will have dropped to approximately the level of 30 years earlier. It will then begin to rise again through the end of the century, reaching 17,692,000 in the year 2000. Figure I graphically depicts the potential consequences to higher education of the steep drop in the birth rate during the 1960's and 1970's. It compares the predictions made in 1965 by Cartter and Farrell with those made fifteen years later. It clearly reveals a picture totally different from that expected during the 1960's.

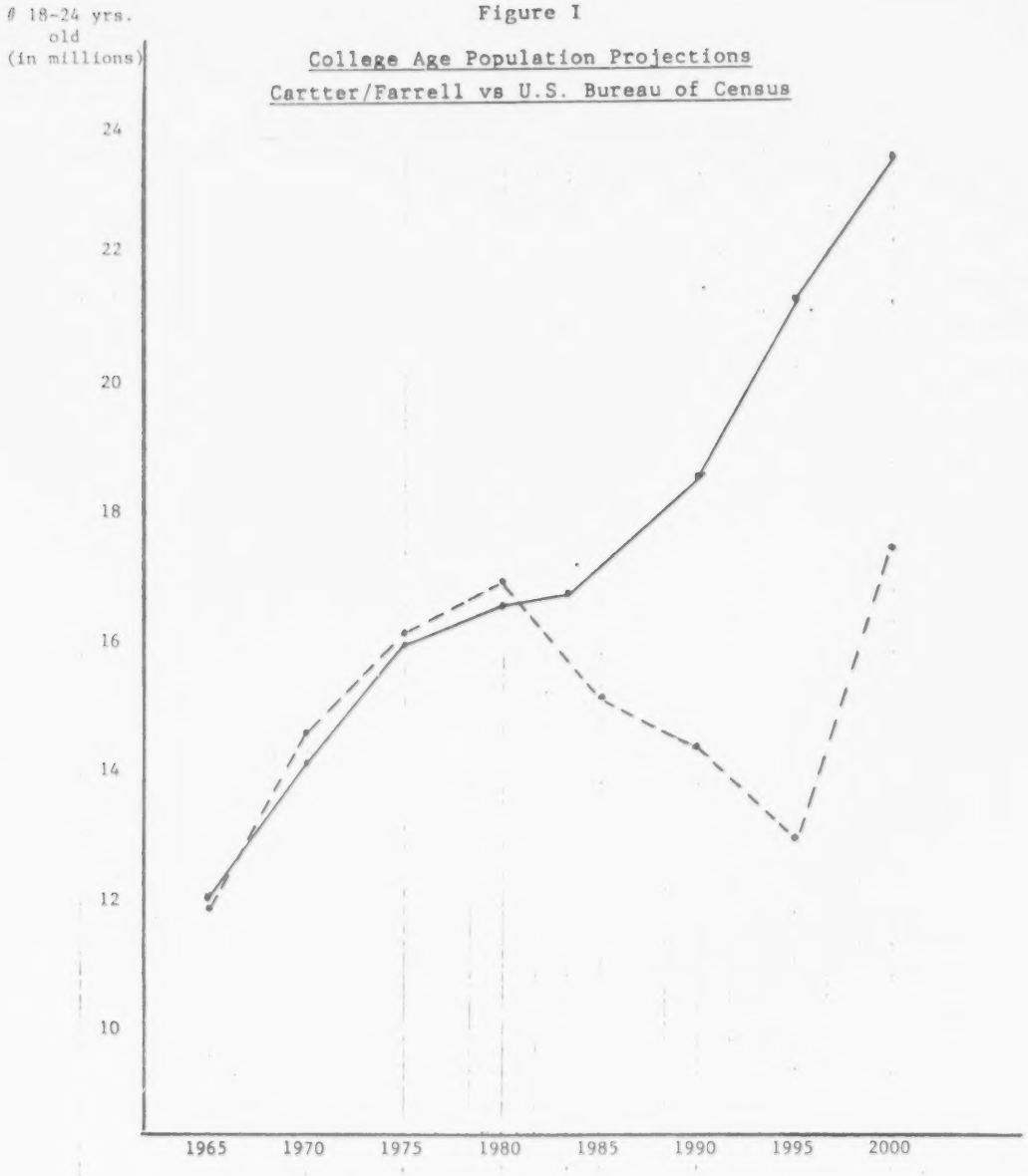
Although the drop in the number of college-aged students is forecast at 26 percent nationally, the pattern is extremely varied among regions and states. In 1979 William McConnell of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education made predictions of college enrollments for all fifty states, taking into consideration birth rates and migration patterns. His report presents a sobering picture for the Northeast and Massachusetts in particular. He predicts that the Northeast region will see a drop of approximately 40 percent in the number of 18 year-olds by 1994. Massachusetts will be among the hardest hit of all the states. McConnell predicts a 43 percent decline in the number of 18 year-olds by 1994, almost 75 percent greater than for the nation as a whole.

McConnell's predictions are confirmed by reports of the actual live births in Massachusetts. Table III reveals that the greatest number of resident births in Massachusetts occurred in 1961 with 116,794 which translates into 1979 as the peak

Figure I

College Age Population Projections

Cartter/Farrell vs U.S. Bureau of Census



Key: ——— Cartter/Farrell
----- U.S. Bureau of Census

Year	1965 Cartter/Farrell	1979 U.S. Census Bureau
1965	12,282,000	12,203,000
1970	14,278,000	14,707,000
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2000	23,730,000	17,692,000

Source: Cartter and Farrell 1965 and U.S. Bureau of Census, Population Characteristics 1979.

year for the college-aged population. And, like the nation, the low point for births came in 1976 with slightly under 66,000.

Table III

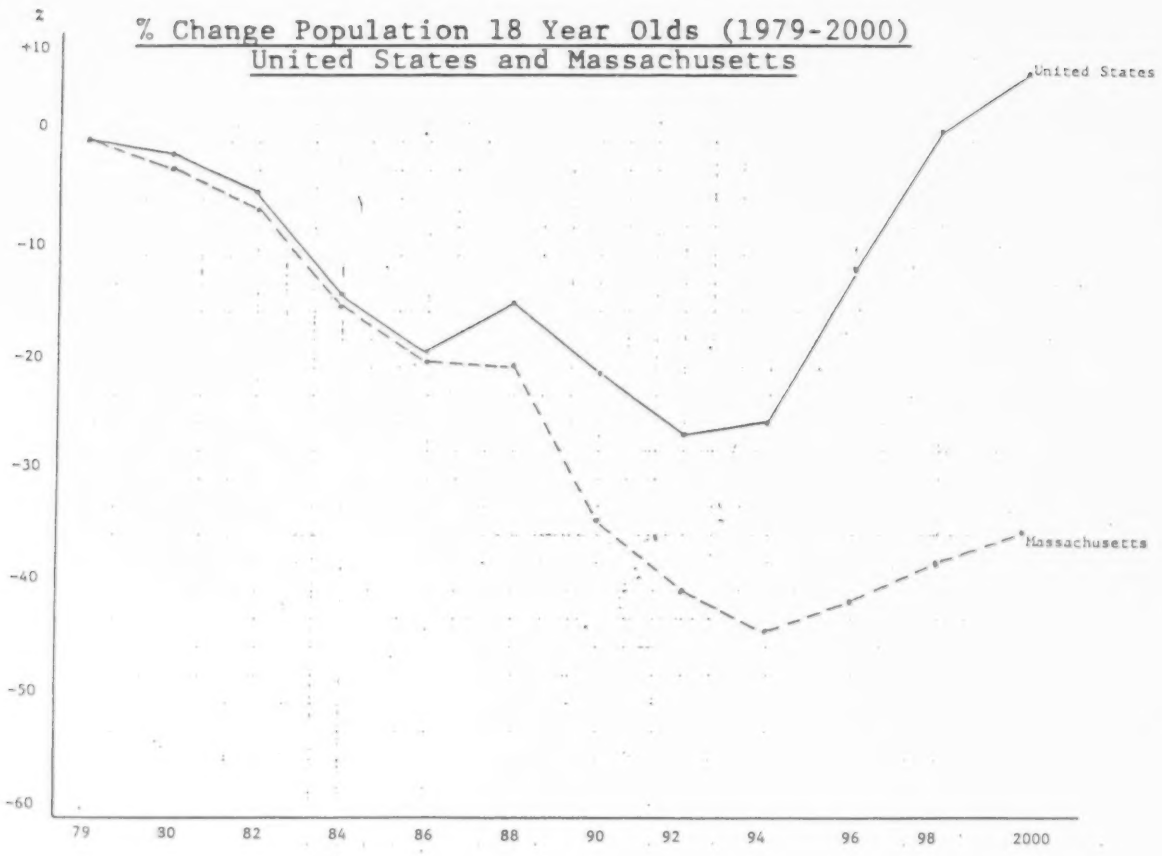
MASSACHUSETTS RESIDENT BIRTHS

Year	Births	Year	Births
1960	114,018	1972	76,835
1961	116,794	1973	72,237
1962	114,042	1974	70,071
1963	113,122	1975	68,070
1964	110,188	1976	65,947
1965	102,532	1977	67,838
1966	99,685	1978	68,526
1967	97,324	1979	70,568
1968	94,048	1980	72,597
1969	95,098	1981	73,931
1970	93,582	1982	73,749
1971	86,755		

Source: Massachusetts Board of Regents of Higher Education, 1983.

Figure II demonstrates the depth of the problem in Massachusetts. The graph compares the percentage change in the population of 18 year-olds from the base year of 1979, the peak year, for Massachusetts and the U.S. For the nation as a whole the decline will be much less dramatic and the resurgence of this age group will even surpass its previous peak by the end of the century. Massachusetts will have no such resurgence, but instead a slow but steady climb out of its deep depression. It is painfully evident that the "Window of Vulnerability," as Clayton Wharton terms it (1983), to be faced by the nation during the 15 year period between 1979 and 1994 will be considerably wider and deeper for Massachusetts.

Figure II



% Change Population of 18 Year Olds (1979-2000)
United States and Massachusetts

Year	% Change from 1979 United States	% Change from 1979 Massachusetts
1979	0.0%	0.0%
1980	- 1.9%	- 2.4%
1982	- 4.8%	- 5.7%
1984	-13.7%	-14.6%
1986	-18.0%	-19.5%
1988	-14.9%	-19.9%
1990	-20.2%	-34.2%
1992	-26.2%	-40.0%
1994	-25.4%	-43.5%
1996	-11.3%	-41.3%
1998	+ 0.2%	-37.8%
2000	+ 8.9%	-35.1%

Source: Board of Regents 1983.

III. THE EFFECT OF DECLINE ON THE COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The Appearance of Optimism

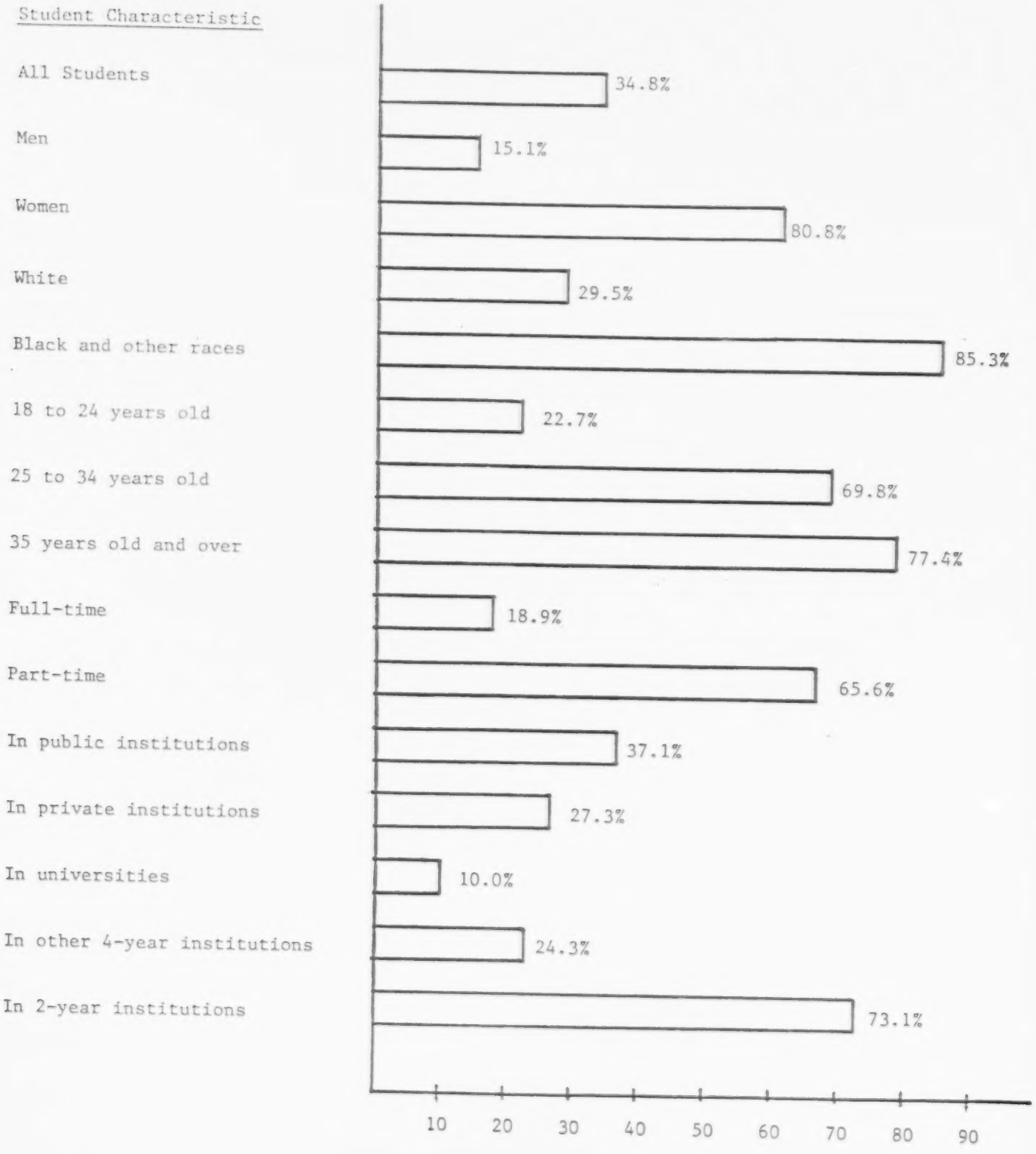
How will the decline effect Community Colleges and particularly those in Massachusetts? It is evident that almost every institution both private and public, two and four year will feel the impact in some way, in the quality of the applicant pool and resulting enrollment if not in actual numerical decline.

Most observers feel that the diminishment of the traditional college-aged population will be felt most heavily by newer, small, private liberal arts institutions without adequate financial support to weather the next ten to fifteen years. Public sector colleges and universities, with the possible exception of four-year state colleges, are predicted to have relatively fewer problems. In particular public community colleges are seen as occupying an enviable spot in the coming crisis. Most experts believe them to be the least vulnerable to shifting demographics and especially to the decline in the 18-21 year-old population. Clark Kerr (1979) for one, sees "clear sailing" for the public community colleges with almost no difficulties. He sees their opportunities for expansion as "almost endless." The optimism seems very well founded if you consider the recent demographic trends in college enrollment and the accompanied success of community colleges. There is a very high correlation between the increase in certain attendance patterns nationally and those in community colleges.

Figure III indicates where the greatest percentage gains have been made in the ten year period between 1972 and 1982.

Figure III

Percentage Increases in the Enrollment of College Students
With Selected Characteristics
United States - Fall 1972 to Fall 1982



Source: Digest of Educational Statistics, 1983-84.

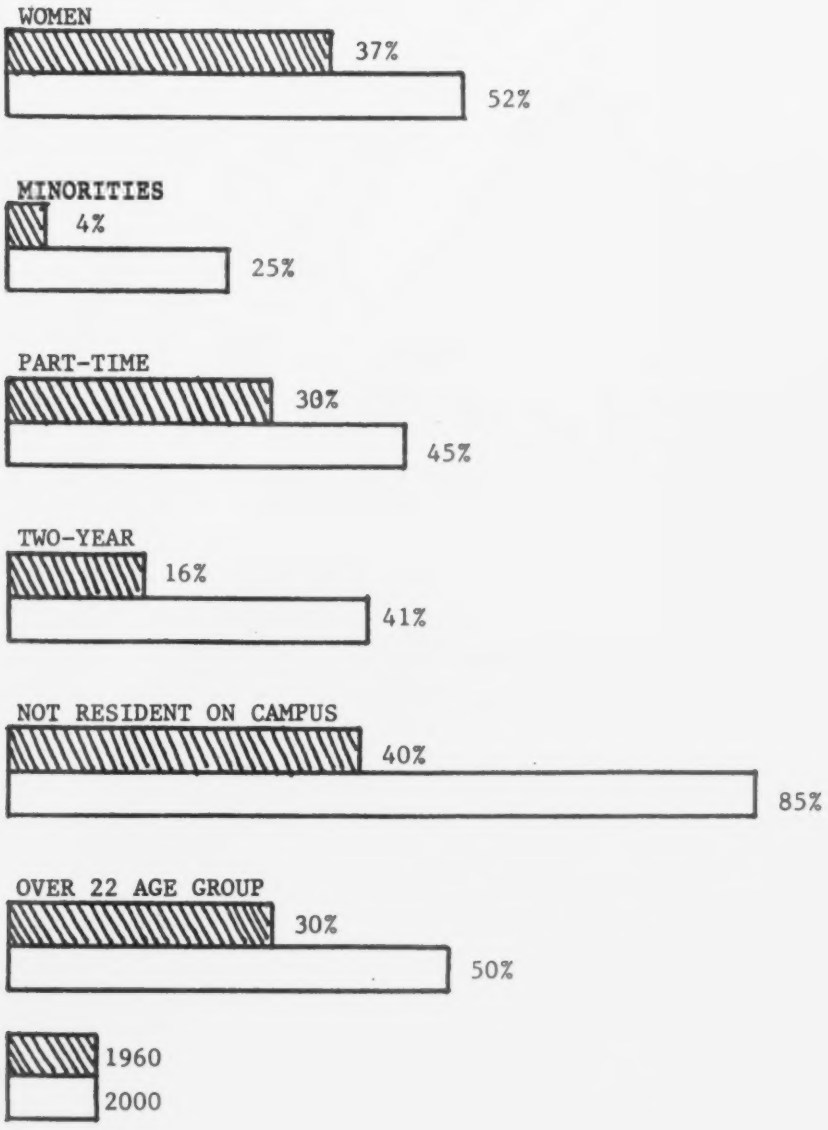
The total enrollment increase in higher education during this period was 35 percent, from roughly 9.2 million in 1972 to 12.4 million in 1982. However, as the figure indicates, there were major, significant differences among various groupings of students. Growth rates were extremely high for women, minorities, students over 25 years-old, and part-time students, all showing well over 50 percent increase during the period. The growth in community college enrollment during this period was phenomenal. The share of enrollments rose from 29.9 percent in 1972 to 38.4 percent in 1982. Today more than half of all new college freshmen are enrolled in community colleges (Grant and Snyder, 1983).

What the numbers indicate is the relatively high attractiveness of community colleges to those categories of students having increased substantially in enrollment during the last decade. Past success is assured, but what of the future? Is it reasonable to believe that community colleges will retain or even continue to increase their share of enrollments? As indicated above, there has been almost unanimous agreement among observers that the community college will do well in the years ahead.

The Carnegie Council, in its final report in 1980, directed attention toward the next 20 years and predicted that community colleges would continue to increase their share of enrollments. They envisioned an educational mix in the year 2000 quite different from that of 1980 and radically changed from 1960, the base year for the projections.

Figure IV, taken from the Carnegie study, reveals some

Figure IV
Undergraduate Student Characteristics
in 1960 and 2000 (projected)



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census (1964): U.S. NCES (1972): and Carnegie Council estimates.

startling statistics. Approximately half of all students will be women, almost half will be attending part-time, half will be older than 22 years of age, one quarter will be minorities, an astounding 85 percent will be commuters, and more than 40 percent will be attending community colleges.

In 1980 the American Council on Education issued a report written by Carol Frances, the Chief Economist for the Council. The report offered a dozen strategies that, if employed even in part, could potentially offset the decline and perhaps result in increased enrollments. These were:

- Increase high school graduation rate to 80 percent from the current 75 percent.
- Increase percentage of high school dropouts taking tests for high school credentials to 9.6 percent from current 7.6 percent.
- Increase college enrollment rates of young people from lower and middle-income families to current rates for higher income groups.
- Increase high school graduation rates of minority group youths to 80 per cent from the current 69.8 percent.
- Increase the enrollment rate in the 18-24 age group to 27 percent from the current 25 percent.
- Cut attrition after first and third years of college by 25 percent.
- Attract into four-year programs 25 percent of those who complete two-year programs.
- Increase enrollment of persons aged 25 and over because of growth in older population group.
- Increase enrollment rates for persons aged 25-34 to 8.7 percent from the current 7.7 percent and for persons aged 35 and over to 2.4 percent from the current 1.4 percent.

- Increase enrollment rate of women aged 18-34 from the current 14.5 percent to 17 percent, the rate for men in the same age group.
- Increase enrollment rate of men aged 35-64 from the current 1.1 percent to 1.7 percent, the rate for women in the same age group.
- Increase enrollment of graduate students.
- Enroll in colleges 2 percent of persons enrolled in courses offered by industrial employers.
- Increase enrollment of foreign students.

The rather simplistic optimism of the report was received with skepticism by many people, among them David Breneman (1983). He has been most pessimistic about the capability of many institutions to utilize these strategies, with the major exception being the community colleges. Most of the sources of additional students are the very groups which community colleges have historically served, especially of late.

First, community colleges have, for years, offered outreach programs for economically and educationally disadvantaged youth. The open door policy has provided an entry into higher education for many who otherwise would have found the way blocked. Federal and State grants have supported such programs in community colleges throughout the country. GED testing programs exist on many community college campuses. The expertise in addressing the needs of the underprepared has been well established.

Second, the community college, through its more non-traditional approach to education is uniquely situated to respond to the needs of the part-time adult learner in the community. It's population is older on the average than any other segment of higher education. Flexibility in scheduling and modes of delivery

have become commonplace in many community colleges. The number of part-time students has grown dramatically over the last few years, and the continuing education and community services divisions of most community colleges are well experienced in meeting the needs of adults.

Potential Dangers

These optimistic predictions for community colleges have unfortunately been based largely on linear extrapolations of past success combined with the perception of community colleges as responsive, flexible organizations able to meet changing educational needs. This picture may have a deepening crack however, that has the potential to leave community colleges as the most damaged institutions in the wake of the declining college-aged cohort.

The first symptom has come in the form of an enrollment drop of around 4 percent nationally this past fall in community colleges (Meyer, 1984). The primary reasons stated for the decline center around the high employment among potential community college students. In the past, when unemployment has been low community college enrollments have suffered, and conversely when the unemployment rate has been high two-year college enrollments have been positively effected. If this were the only reason for the decline, there would be little basis for concern since the problem is a cyclical one. However, the economic issues, while perhaps a primary contributor in the short run, are far outweighted by two more substantive, structural problems that have long range significance for the health of community colleges.

Adult Attendence: The first problem which must be addressed is a possible leveling or even a decline in adult attendance at college. It is a simple conclusion that when the 18-21 year old population declines, the only viable source of students, other than an increase in attendance of this group, is the adult. Statistics show that the college attendance of adults has increased substantially over the last ten years (Grant and Synder, 1983). Community colleges have accounted for much of the growth. Demographic trends as well as evidence in enrollment patterns appear to signal an end to the rapid growth of this segment during the years ahead.

Lyman Glenny, in a well documented work in 1980, stated that the plateau had already been reached in attendance of men over 25 and that the phenomenal rate of growth in female attendance would be shortlived. His findings indicate that the number of adult men entering higher education after age 25 has not increased significantly since 1975. Further, he forsees a leveling of enrollments by women over age 25 sometime in the early 1980's. David Breneman (1983) agrees, feeling that the sharp increase in female enrollments is a "one-time catch up phenomenon that will not repeat itself." In recent years, young women have enrolled in numbers as large as men, unlike the generation preceding them. This trend has been especially marked in community colleges.

The observations of community college presidents this fall echo these sentiments. President Stephen Nicholson of Oregon's Mount Hood Community College feels that the drop in 18-22 year-olds has not hurt as much as the loss of 30-45 year-old students.

Sean Finelli, President of New York's Nassau Community College believes that the pool of older students has been tapped and has begun to lose its reliability as a resource (Meyer, 1984).

Finally the 24-35 age group will itself begin to decline in numbers after 1987, as it feels the affects of the exiting of the baby boomers. This age group has historically been the largest auxiliary group of college enrollees. It remains to be seen whether colleges can continue to attract the members of this large group as they move into middle age. If they cannot, the largest offsetting factor to decline will be lost.

The Competitive Environment: The single most dangerous consequence for community colleges is the associated increase in competition for the available students. Every college administration in the country is aware now of the demographic realties and is beginning to search for ways to offset the decline in the traditional student. The Carnegie Council refers to it as the "supremacy of the market" (1980). The mass student market, of interest primarily to community colleges during the good years, will be courted by most institutions and if uncontrolled will lead to "the new revolution" whose theme is survival, and whose product is a loss of diversity, excellence and very possibly the decline of the community college as a force in Amercian education, all at the expense of the new student.

The growth in community college enrollments during the 1960's and 1970's was precipitated by the vast increase in the numbers of students who wished to attend college. More 18 year-olds were accompanied, through social change, by more females,

minorities and older students. Some writers have viewed the community colleges as "safety valves" in which the primary function has been to relieve pressure on the colleges and universities. According to Astin, "educators in more prestigious institutions have probably supported community college growth because it represented a way of expanding educational opportunities that did not threaten their own selectivity" (Astin, 1977).

It is perhaps better however to refer to the community colleges as "overflow tanks" than as safety valves. As the enrollments swelled the community colleges were glad to accept the "poor, less qualified, local, career and vocationally oriented non-traditional and minority students with little competition from four-year institutions" (Johnson, 1977). The senior schools, burdened with more than enough students were happy to see this "democratization" taking place through the creation of community colleges. However, as the traditional students begin to decline in numbers, these institutions will begin to siphon back from the overflow tank, reaching out to markets previously served by community colleges thus causing them potentially an even greater share of the enrollment loss than would be expected based on local demographics done.

Longitudinal statistics are not yet readily available but the signs are there. Standards are dropping for admittance to most schools, and many have stepped up the marketing of evening and non-credit programs to adult learners. McCartan (1983) notes that state four-year colleges in particular have begun to expand their curriculum to "territory previously considered

the primary domain of community colleges." Campbell and Korim (1979) have documented the increased interest of four-year colleges in occupational training and associate degrees.

It is unrealistic to believe that the drive for market share will be worked out amicably among the different types of institutions. This leaves the community colleges with the options of meeting the competitive challenge through internal strength or of relying on external support and control to bring about order.

IV. THE MASSACHUSETTS COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Structural Weaknesses

Many community colleges will conceivably meet the challenge. Those in Massachusetts however, are in an extremely poor position. These colleges are among the most traditional in the country. Funding support comes almost totally from the state Legislature, based upon the number of full-time equivilent students (FTE's) attending school during the day hours in credit bearing courses. All evening credit and non-credit programs must be self supporting by law. Massachusetts is one of the last states to make this arbitrary separation between the day and evening programs for funding purposes.

The faculty in the Massachusetts community colleges are unionized and represented by a very powerful, state affiliate of the NEA. Their workload is contractually one of the lowest in the nation, and they maintain a strong seniority system and are heavily tenured. The system of colleges was begun in the

early sixties with the emphasis on transfer programs. Many faculty hired during this period remain and are represented primarily by white males aged 45-55. It is therefore not expected that many will retire during the next 10 years. The use of part-time faculty is also very low compared with other states and leaves the colleges with little flexibility to alter or adjust programs.

Finally, the students in the day programs are, in the majority, aged 18-21; between 60 and 80 percent in most community colleges. All these factors make it very difficult for the community colleges in Massachusetts to compete effectively during a period when flexibility and responsiveness are absolutely necessary.

Current Policies of the Board of Regents

The Board of Regents was established in 1980 under Chapter 15A of the Massachusetts General Laws replacing the previous segmental Boards which had overseen the Community Colleges, State Colleges, and Universities. The purpose of the Regents is to "develop, foster, and advocate a comprehensive system of public higher education of high quality, flexibility, responsiveness and accountability." To achieve these goals the Regents has been charged with the responsibility to "preserve and promote diversity of educational mission and function within the system" (Chapter 15A, Sec. 1).

To date it appears that the Board of Regents has taken its charge seriously through the development of specific mission statements, and admissions standards for the various types of institutions. It also appears that they are cognizant of the

possible negative consequences to the diversity and quality of education inherent in uncontrolled conflict for student markets.

Differentiated Missions Statements: In response to its mandate to promote diversity, the Regents very early took on the challenge of establishing differentiated missions for the various groupings of institutions i.e., universities, state colleges, and community colleges. The process was extremely complex and difficult involving participation from representatives of all institutions in formulating statements acceptable to all. What emerged was a set of mission statements fairly accurately reflecting the unique characteristics, degree granting authority, and educational aims of the segments of higher education.

The community colleges' mission has been approved as one of open admissions in order to:

- provide associate degree programs which prepare individuals for paraprofessional, allied health, technical, and service occupations.
- provide associate degree programs which prepare individuals to transfer to bacculaureate programs.
- provide certificate programs in specialized career and vocational areas.
- have primary responsibility for basic skills assessment and developmental education programs.
- provide community service and continuing education programs, community development programs and services, special programs for business, industries and agencies, and other programs, services and activities as are needed and appropriate for their service area.

On balance this is a very good statement of purposes for community colleges. It speaks to the traditional role and also allows for an evolutionary shift in emphasis within these basic responsibilties.

The statement approved for state colleges places an emphasis on accessibility to programs of high quality instruction at the baccalaureate and selected master's degree level. It also requires the state colleges to provide selected public services both as cultural centers and as resources to meet the needs of the citizens.

The problem with these statements is not with what they allow, it is with what they do not disallow. Statements couched in positive terms are ideally suited to times of expansion in enrollments, not to those of contraction and competition. There is nothing in the state colleges' mission that prevents them from offering remedial services or from attracting students to baccalaureate programs who would be better served in community colleges for the first two years.

Statistics show that the expansion of the yield from the traditional-aged students must come from those not traditionally served by higher education. The overwhelming percentage of these students will need remedial programs just to prepare them for college level courses. In the drive to obtain FTE students for funding support, it is feasible and even inevitable that state colleges will heavily recruit these new students.

In the evening programs it is the older student who is returning or in some cases beginning to take courses, predominately for purposes of career development or personal enrichment. Again, research indicates that these students are not interested as much in the degree or the credits as in the value-added benefits of the experience. The mission statements of state colleges,

while not as specifically targeted toward this group, in no way prevent them from directly competing with community colleges. Evidence suggests that it is happening at an accelerated pace. The motivation is dollars.

Admissions Standards: The diverse missions of the segments are again explicitly addressed in the Regent's Policy on Admissions Standards issued in February 1984. The Regents refer once more to their legislated mandate to promote access, quality and diversity in establishing differentiated admissions standards for state colleges and universities. In making the following statement regarding access the Regents reaffirmed their earlier view of the community colleges:

> No student will be denied access to post-secondary education because our community colleges form a means of entry to our higher educational system. They perform a distinctive service by providing accessible, low cost, high quality programs, both technical/vocational and liberal arts transfer. With their special emphasis on teaching excellence and their strong counseling programs, they perform an equally important service in providing compensatory educational programs for students whose previous education has been limited or inadequate. The existence of learning centers and computer-assisted and self-paced learning modules, coupled with a faculty sensitive to student needs, creates an environment to motivate students whose previous education has been limited or inadequate.

Further, in order to keep the door open, the Regents moved to establish a broad based waiver of tuition policy and strengthen the transfer articulation between two and four year institutions.

The Regents next turned to the issue of quality and determined that the best ways to ensure quality were to provide for continual rigorous evaluation of new and existing programs and, of central

importance, to establish appropriate admissions standards for the senior institutions. By insisting on miniumum standards of preparation the Regents could assure that "these students are able to begin immediately, rigorous baccalaureate programs." Strongly implied in this statement, since community colleges are excluded from coverage under the admissions standards, is that community colleges will provide the remedial programs to prepare students who could not qualify immediately for such rigorous baccalaureate programs.

The components of the admissions policy contain both the enhancement of academic units required in high school and an "admissions eligibility index" made up of a combined SAT and weighted high school rank for those students entering directly from high school.

The admissions standards were developed through a form of negotiated consensus among presidents, a process similar to that employed to arrive at mission statements. Unfortunately, the end product again leaves a large gap into which state colleges may enter the community college market for students. In order to promote diversity, this time within each senior institution, the policy exempts the following groups from the eligibility index segment of the standards:

- GED students
- Evening School graduates
- Students who graduated from high school more than three years before applying to college
- Special needs students as defined under Chapter 766

- Educationally disadvantaged students defined as such through factors such as low income, limited English proficiency, and discrimination because of race
- Associate degree students.

For each group with the noted exception of the last, there is an associated requirement to provide counseling, refresher courses, individual testing, or other programs to improve "such students' skills so that they can achieve their full potential."

These waivers provide a license to four year schools to set up remedial programs and heavily recruit educationally under-prepared students. There is no limit to the number, only a requirement to provide the Regents with the policy used in the admissions evaluation and annual updates of the number admitted and their progress.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Carnegie Council, in its Final Report on Policy Studies in Higher Education addressed its findings in part to State planners with a warning that too negative a view of the future could turn out to be a self fulfilling prophecy, and that "creation and use of fair competition in the student market is a better alternative than increasingly detailed state control in managing student decline" (1980).

There is unfortunately a certain irony in this statement for it appears that the Regents, as the state's chief planning group for public higher education, must take steps to exercise control of enrollment in order for a system of fair competition to exist. Most of the predictors, including the Carnegie Council

are correct when they predict that the impact of the enrollment decline will be felt differentially among the various institutions. Unfortunately, most are incorrect in their assessment of where the greatest impact will be felt. Without a considerable amount of broad coordinative control of all the segments of public higher education in a state such as Massachusetts, community colleges are very likely to face catastrophic enrollment losses ultimately leading to the next level of reorganization, that of merger or closings.

In conclusion, there are several recommendations I would offer to help ensure that the community colleges in Massachusetts will survive as a viable element in the system of higher education. Before making them however, it is important to note several assumptions.

First, it must be assumed that the community colleges serve unique and important functions in higher education. If it were assumed that another type of institution could perform these functions as effectively as the community colleges there would be at least some room for doubt as to the need for the community colleges.

The literature is abundant with criticism of the community colleges' reluctance to define a specific unduplicated mission. However, the Regents have constructed an extremely good statement of missions for the Massachusetts Community Colleges. Within that statement I believe that the strength of these colleges lies in their ability to effectively handle underprepared students and to provide a quality transfer program to the four year insti-

tutions, as well as the provision of two year career programs.

The second assumption that must be accepted is the commitment to a continued enlargement of the numbers of students who may benefit from a "higher education." There is evidence that this assumption may not be accepted at the federal level. The signs are there that the current administration, through its approach to the funding of financial aid programs, would reduce the percentage of the traditional college-aged population who attend college at the same time that the total numbers in this group are diminishing. The Regents on the other hand are committed to enlarging the number of students who attend public colleges in Massachusetts, especially through its substantial increase in scholarship monies and waivers of tuition available.

Finally, the third assumption relates to the speed with which the recommendations offered below are instituted. The wheels of bureaucracy turn very slowly and the public higher education system is no exception. It is very important that steps be taken immediately to prevent the potentially large drops in enrollment from precipitating actions by the Legislature to mandate fast and possibly damaging budgetary changes.

Recommendations

Policy Enforcement: The Regents must move quickly to close the loop holes in its mission statements and admissions standards and bring about a very strong mandatory transferability of credits earned in the community colleges to the state colleges and universities. By eliminating or greatly reducing the waivers of admissions standards, and enforcing those standards by audit the Regents

will thereby strengthen the differentiated mission statements.

As the pool of available traditional college-aged students drops, colleges may increase the numbers who attend only by taking students who are less and less well prepared. These students who are underprepared may be best handled by the community colleges. They are historically better suited and have programs already in place. If these students attend the four-year institutions they will either be offered developmental help through programs duplicating those of the community colleges or they will be early casualties. The transfer of credits to the senior institutions must also be made mandatory, and of equal importance, the student must know this before entering college. Transfer compacts are beginning to develop but must be accelerated. The Massachusetts community colleges have documented the success of their graduates in the four year institutions. Ironically, the private sector has been more amenable to accepting credit than some of the state colleges.

Budgetary Issues: The budget formula as it currently exists relies on a full-time equivalent (FTE) student base. Fifteen credit hours is the equivalent of one FTE. An amount per FTE is either deducted or added depending on the Fall enrollment of the previous year. This concept is very heavily weighted toward traditional four-year colleges in which the norm is a full-time student taking fifteen credits per semester for four years. The community colleges in no way fit this mold.

First, the ratio of full to part-time students is declining rapidly and will continue. However, each of these part-time

students needs the same amount of counseling, admissions, and other administrative support. This fact should be considered in the budget formula.

Second, the Regents formula for "high cost courses" has been used to generate additional funds for those courses/programs that have unusually large overhead costs such as engineering and computer sciences. Remedial or developmental programs should be considered to be of high cost. The amount of time per student on a one-to-one basis is extraordinarily high. If, as it appears now, that a great many new students will have need for remedial or devlopmental assistance, the cost of this type of program could easily outstrip the budgeted allocation unless supported in relation to its cost.

Third, I would recommend that serious consideration be given to funding all credit programs and courses, no matter when offered, through the annual legislative appropriation. Massachusetts is one of only a few states in which credit courses provided at night and during the summer must be offered through a Division of Continuing Education at no expense to the state.

These DCE credit programs must meet the same standards as those of the day division but cost more per credit hour due to the need to cover all costs of instructors. The implementation of such a recommendation would be somewhat complex and care would have to be exercised not to damage existing DCE programs. Full implementation would probably take several years, however I believe the potential benefits to be well worth the effort.

Enrollment in credit programs in the Division of Continuing

Education will suffer to some extent in the next decade. Perhaps not to the same extent unless the prediction of a decline in adult attendance materializes, but there will be an impact. Marketing of credit programs could be made more efficient, and some economies could be realized by bringing these courses fully under the academic affairs component of the college. Also by bringing the funding of DCE courses under the state budget, the total decline in credit students in both the day and evening could be handled more reasonably and with far less pain. Currently the Division of Continuing Education pays for all faculty costs through individual course contracts. The day programs are taught predominantly by full-time faculty. As indicated earlier, the community colleges in Massachusetts have an extremely low part-time faculty ratio. If the Legislature were to fund an amount equal to that now expended for evening and summer faculty in the State budget under the line item for part-time faculty, the colleges would immediately have an increased flexibility across both the day and evening to respond to enrollment decline. As the enrollments declined the budgets could be reduced through a decrease in part-time faculty costs and, of great importance, if the teachers' union was to agree, full-time faculty could be given teaching loads within their regular assignment to include evening and summer courses if they did not have a sufficient load otherwise. This process could greatly reduce the number of full-time faculty retrenched during the next ten years, to the benefit of the colleges, their employees, and students.

The lion's share of responsibility for making these recommendations a realty rests with the Regents. The Board has taken several steps already that place it ahead of many state boards in responding to the enrollment decline. But, the Board of Regents must take these additional steps proposed here to bring about a set of conditions that will allow the community colleges to continue to provide a quality service to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

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